

Louvers for new Parliament building

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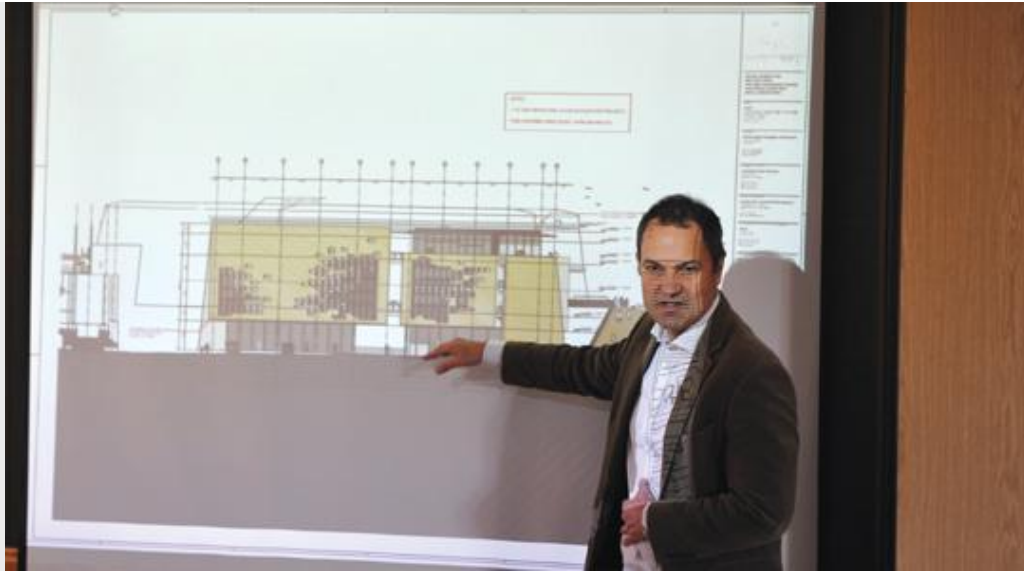


Excavations are well ahead for the basement level of the new Parliament building which is currently in its detailing stage.

The new Parliament building in Valletta will be clad in large stone slabs that will be carved to give the illusion that louvers were created through the effects of erosion.

The Malta Environment and Planning Authority board yesterday approved minor amendments to Parliament House that will be built in Valletta's Freedom Square as part of architect Renzo Piano's City Gate project.

After excavation works started in October, the project – to be completed by the end of next year – is in its detailing stage.



**Architect Konrad Buhagiar showing Mepa board members a drawing of Parliament's façade.
Photos: Chris Sant Fournier**

Architect Konrad Buhagiar outlined the proposed changes to the facade, which was previously designed as a blank wall, saying the concept from Mr Piano's Paris office was to ensure that Parliament did not have normal windows. The idea was to clad it in large slabs of hard stone out of which louvers would be carved. The louvers would act as a shading device for the windows behind them.

"This way the windows will be created in an organic way, as though nature eroded them," Mr Buhagiar said.

Parliament House will consist of two blocks: the Chamber and offices. The blocks will be built on columns to give an impression of space at the city entrance. They will be separated to allow pedestrians to view St James Cavalier behind them.

The Mepa board approved an increase in the height of the building by 45 centimetres and a lowering of the bottom floor – which will be supported by the columns – by 25 centimetres. Mr Buhagiar said this was being done to accommodate the minimum height of the offices.

The case officer, who recommended all proposed alterations for approval, said the minor height changes would not pose a threat to cultural heritage and would not damage Valletta's world heritage status.

Other changes approved included the relocation of an access staircase, previously located externally between the two buildings, to the internal part of the office block.

The link between Parliament building and a tunnel below it was shifted forward, towards the entrance. The tunnel leads from St James Cavalier and passes under Parliament to emerge in the opening near St John's Bastions.


The archive and plant room have switched locations, with the former moved to the mid-section of the tunnel and the plant room to the far end.

The footprint of the building was retained with the exception of the removal of the outside staircase.

The City Gate project was approved by Mepa last March and consists of the rebuilding of the Valletta entrance, the building of Parliament House and a roofless theatre on the site of the former Royal Opera House.

Back then, Mepa had approved the development with nine votes to one with the Labour Party representative on the board, Roderick Galdes, voting against. Mr Galdes yesterday too was the only one to vote against the proposed amendments.


Comments

Jesmond Micallef(1 week, 3 days ago) 

Very interesting this concept of louvers, a sort of "weathered camouflage", in principle. The picture here highlights how surprisingly clean and very professionally organised this construction site is. That natural yellow beauty of that freshly exposed Maltese Limestone is also a spectacle which reminds me of the quarries where the typical stone slab of Maltese construction is cut, eventhough they spoil the natural landscape somehow. The Maltese islands are blessed with this natural beauty of geology. Cool, well done to all the people engaged in this project. As a Maltese citizen, I'm looking forward.

apgrech(1 week, 3 days ago) 

Sung to the tune of Put another nickel in Look at what is taking place at our beautiful, historic Belt These new buildings will be known as ugly,ugly, ugly. A monstrous decision by this admin. Their names will be inscribed in the minds of many future generations as a dumb and irresponsible for building these non-matching buildings close to our majestic and beautiful buildings of our Capital. A bit of basic common sense will tell you that the design is stunat. Enjoy the fruits of your last election decisions, Maltesers.

Christopher Pollard(1 week, 3 days ago) 

In English the word is "Louvre".